

The Theology of Rob Bell

Rob Bell explains that religious beliefs need to be examined and reformed, or they will turn outdated and useless to us - Christianity Today 8/2005

To make the cross of Jesus just about human salvation is to miss that God is interested in the saving of everything. -p.161 Velvet Elvis

..the most powerful things happen when the church surrenders its desire to convert people and convince them to join... the church must stop thinking about everybody primarily in categories of in or out, saved or not, believer or nonbeliever. -p.167 Velvet Elvis

Excerpt from Velvet Elvis

Jesus at one point claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the life". Jesus was not making claims about one religion being better than all other religions. That completely misses the point, the depth, and the truth. Rather, he was telling those who were following him that his way is the way to the depth of reality. This kind of life Jesus was living, perfectly and completely in connection and cooperation with God, is the best possible way for a person to live. This is how things are. -p. 21

This three-in-oneness understanding of God emerged in the several hundred years after Jesus' resurrection. -p. 22

"...it wasn't until the 300s that what we know as the sixty-six books of the Bible were actually agreed upon as the 'Bible'. This is part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that "Scripture alone" is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true. In reaction to abuses by the church, a group of believers during a time called the Reformation claimed that we only need the authority of the Bible. But the problem is that we got the Bible from the church voting on what the Bible even is. So when I affirm the Bible as God's word, in the same breath I have to affirm that when those people voted, God was somehow present, guiding them to do what they did. When people say that all we need is the Bible, it is simply not true. In affirming the Bible as inspired, I also have to affirm the Spirit who I believe was inspiring those people to choose those books." -p. 67-68

"Heaven is full of forgiven people. Hell is full of forgiven people. Heaven is full of people God loves, whom Jesus died for. Hell is full of forgiven people God loves, whom Jesus died for. The difference is how we choose to live, which story we choose to live in, which version of reality we trust. Ours or God's." -p. 146

The Theology of Rob Bell

"When people use the word hell, what do they mean? They mean a place, an event, a situation absent of how God desires things to be. **Famine, debt, oppression, loneliness, despair, death, slaughter--they are all hell on earth. Jesus' desire for his followers is that they live in such a way that they bring heaven to earth.** What's disturbing is when people talk more about hell after this life than they do about Hell here and now. **As a Christian, I want to do what I can to resist hell coming to earth.**" -p. 148

"The goal of Jesus isn't to get into heaven. The goal is to get heaven here."
-p. 148

"I can't find one place in the teachings of Jesus, or the Bible for that matter, where we are to identify ourselves first and foremost as sinners. Now this doesn't mean we don't sin; that's obvious. In the book of James it's written like this: 'We all stumble in many ways.' Once again, the greatest truth of the story of Adam and Eve isn't that it happened, but that it happens. We all make choices to live outside of how God created us to live. We have all come up short." - p. 139

Last year some friends asked me to be the pastor for their wedding ceremony. **They had been together for a while** and decided to make it official and throw a huge weekend party, and they invited me to be a part of it. **They said they didn't want any Jesus or God or Bible or religion to be talked about.** But they did want me to make it really spiritual. The bride said it in her own great way, **"Rob, do that thing you do. Make it really profound and deep and spiritual!"**

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Anyway, I asked my friends why they wanted to be married in such a natural, organic setting, since it was four hours from where we all live. They talked about the beauty of nature, its peacefulness, and the way they fell in love in this part of the state. Then the groom said something I will never forget: "Something holds this all together."

Something holds this all together.

So then I asked them if they thought it was a mistake that they had found each other. And they said, no, they believed they were meant to be together and it was no accident that they met and fell in love. I then asked them, "Do you think whatever it is that holds all *this* together is the same thing that has brought you two together?" They said yes. Same thing.

So I said that maybe what makes their relationship so meaningful to them is that it's a picture of something much bigger. The same force that brought them together holds the whole world together. I then asked, "So today, your wedding is about something far more significant than just the two of you becoming husband

The Theology of Rob Bell

and wife, isn't it?"

They then said they would call this glue, this force, "God."

I tell you all this to point out that my friends already intuitively believe certain things about the universe and the way the world works. All I was doing was asking questions about things they already knew to be true.

I didn't have to convince them of anything. Now I could go on about the ceremony and the party afterward and the way it ended up being one of the most sacred things I have ever been a part of, but I want to leave you up on that cliff having that conversation.

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So in the deepest sense we can comprehend, my friends are resonating with Jesus, whether they acknowledge it or not.

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In affirming and celebrating all that they did that day on that cliff, my friends are closer to Jesus than they will ever imagine. -p.75-77, 92

Christianity Today- The Emergent Mystique November 2004

"This is not just the same old message with new methods," Rob says. "We're rediscovering Christianity as an Eastern religion, as a way of life."

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In fact, as the Bells describe it, after launching Mars Hill in 1999, they found themselves increasingly uncomfortable with church. "Life in the church had become so small," Kristen says. "It had worked for me for a long time. Then it stopped working." The Bells started questioning their assumptions about the Bible itself—"discovering the Bible as a human product," as Rob puts it, rather than the product of divine fiat. "The Bible is still in the center for us," Rob says, "but it's a different kind of center. We want to embrace mystery, rather than conquer it."

"I grew up thinking that we've figured out the Bible," Kristen says, "that we knew what it means. Now I have no idea what most of it means. And yet I feel like life is big again—like life used to be black and white, and now it's in color."

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An earlier generation of evangelicals, forged in battles with 20th-century liberalism, prided themselves on avoiding theological shades of gray, but their children see black, white, and gray as all equally unlikable. They are looking for a faith that is colorful enough for their culturally savvy friends, deep enough for mystery, big enough for their own doubts.

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The Theology of Rob Bell

And how did the Bells find their way out of the black-and-white world where they had been so successful and so dissatisfied? "Our lifeboat," Kristen says, "was A New Kind of Christian."

[Theparish.typepad.com/parish/2006/08/rob_bell_interv.html](http://theparish.typepad.com/parish/2006/08/rob_bell_interv.html)
http://theparish.typepad.com/parish/files/rob_bell.mp3 5min 30sec

"The past two nights in Texas, when I get into Genesis 1 being a poem, they were cheering the past two nights- that the Bible does not begin with a scientific treatise."